

CHARLIE BAKER
GOVERNOR



KARYN POLITO
LT. GOVERNOR

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CONTACT

Elizabeth Guyton, Governor's Office

elizabeth.guyton@state.ma.us

Rhonda Mann, Health & Human Services

rhonda.mann@state.ma.us



**Baker-Polito Administration Launches New Substance
Misuse Anti-Stigma Campaign**

Ads Designed To Change Attitudes About Drug Misuse, Support Those In Recovery



[Click here to view more about the #StateWithoutStigMA campaign.](#)

BOSTON – Calling on every resident to do their part to stop addiction in its tracks,

Governor Charlie Baker announced a second statewide media campaign today, with the bold goal of making Massachusetts a “#StateWithoutStigMA.” The campaign, built off one of the Governor’s Opioid Working Group recommendations last June, is designed to impact the negative stereotype of drug misuse, asserting that addiction is not a choice, it’s an illness.

“Addiction is a chronic illness, not a moral failure,” **said Governor Baker** at a State House press conference, surrounded by people in recovery. “Studies show that stigmas can prevent people from getting into treatment—holding them back from recovery, stability and success. This campaign is another effort to bend the trend and change the way we think about opioid misuse and addiction.”

“The image many of us have of addiction comes from the movies and usually involves needles and a dark alley,” **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. “With this epidemic, drug misuse frequently starts with a pill bottle. These people and their families need our encouragement to get the treatment they need to recover.”

The five-week campaign kickoff utilizes radio, billboards and digital ads, featuring Massachusetts’ residents in treatment for substance use disorders. It seeks to reduce stigma by providing detailed information about the illness of addiction, educating the public about stigmatizing behaviors and how to reduce them and encouraging those impacted and their families to talk about their journey, bringing the disease out of the shadows.

“Published research confirms that the stigma of addiction—negative attitudes and labels targeting those with drug problems—is a significant reason people do not seek treatment,” **said Marylou Sudders, Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services**. “Embracing those who are struggling, rather than shunning them, is a critical component to curbing this crisis.”

“As a physician, I know that the only way to treat addiction is to treat it like we do other illnesses through proper prevention, intervention, treatments, and long-term recovery,” **said Dr. Monica Bharel, Commissioner of the Department of Public Health**.

Thirty-three English and Spanish radio stations will air the :30 and :15 spots around the state. Sixty-four billboards will reach 5.9 million riders each week. The campaign’s website, www.mass.gov/StateWithoutStigMA, houses videos from those in recovery talking about how stigma hurts and asks visitors to Take a Pledge of support. Viewers to the website can also nominate a #StateWithoutStigMA Champion of the Month—an individual, group or business that has done extraordinary work to eliminate the stigma of addiction. Through Twitter and Facebook, residents will be urged to post

their own supportive statements and videos.

Large banners with the #StateWithoutStigMA message to those communities with high overdose rates will be hanging on municipal buildings in cities and town across the state including Springfield, Worcester, Gloucester, North Adams, Everett, Taunton, Revere, Weymouth, Haverhill, Malden and Somerville.

The \$850,000 campaign was paid for through a federal grant to the Department of Public Health.

This campaign is one of many [recommendations from the Governor's Opioid Working Group](#). The administration has already implemented many reforms, such as allocating \$114 million in this year's budget to spending for substance abuse, allowing bulk purchasing of Narcan by municipalities and changing the Prescription Monitoring Program reporting requirement. Most recently, Governor Baker filed [landmark legislation](#) to provide medical personnel with the power to intervene with patients suffering from addiction, control the spread of addictive prescription opioids and increase education about substance use disorder (SUD) for providers and in the community.

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